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Enquiries:

Helanya Fourie
Senior Economist, BER
Email: helanya@sun.ac.za
Tel: +27 (0)82 722 7028

Prof Johann Kirsten
Director, BER
Email: jkirsten@sun.ac.za
Tel: +27 (0)82 372 3131

Press release

New report reflects on progress towards NDP objectives

The National Development Plan (NDP), adopted in 2012, was written to reflect South Africa's national development objectives and serve as a policy guide to 2030. In the 2019 State of the Nation Address (SONA), President Cyril Ramaphosa sharpened the focus on these objectives by outlining "seven priorities of the Sixth Administration". This was in line with a recommendation by the National Planning Commission (NPC), who argued that when it comes to development objectives, "less can be more" and "What one cannot measure properly, one cannot manage properly" (NPC, 2018)¹. The seven priorities that the president identified are fully aligned with the wider scope of the NDP.

In the 2021 SONA, the president emphasised four priorities to specifically address the economic and social onslaught of the COVID-19 pandemic. These are to (1) defeat the Coronavirus pandemic, (2) accelerate economic recovery, (3) implement economic reform in a way that creates sustainable jobs and drives inclusive growth, and (4) fight corruption and strengthen the state. Besides the added priorities of defeating the pandemic and supporting a sustained post-COVID economic recovery, these priorities do not diverge from the objectives of the NDP or the seven priorities of the Sixth Administration. The NDP remains the policy guide to 2030.

In this week's SONA debate, Acting Minister in the Presidency, Khumbudzo Ntshavheni, noted the President's invitation to measure the performance of the Sixth Administration against its stated targets. The academic and research communities can contribute to this process by keeping track of progress and providing feedback to decision-makers.

¹ NPC (2018). Measurement of progress with the implementation of the National Development Plan (NDP): a six-year analysis. 19 October. Available online: www.nationalplanningcommission.org.za

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While the detail contained in the close to 500 pages of the NDP is necessary for context, insight and policy guidance, it does not allow for effective monitoring and evaluation of progress with achieving the goals set out in the Plan. The Medium-Term Strategic Framework (MTSF) lays out the interventions and actions needed to ensure that South Africa achieves Vision 2030, but it does not measure how far South Africa has progressed with the objectives of the NDP (NPC, 2018)². There is thus a need for a concise set of indicators that can measure progress towards SA's development objectives.

To respond to this need, the BER developed, in collaboration with a network of more than 20 partners from 18 institutions, as well as input from NPC commissioners, a set of indicators that are aligned with the Sixth Administration's seven priorities and each of the NDP chapters. Indicators were chosen to reflect on output as opposed to inputs such as spending and resource allocation. Whereas the MTSF prescribes *inputs and actions*, the BER's NDP Assessment Report evaluates *impact and outcomes*.

The objective of the BER's NDP Assessment Report is to give a data-driven view of progress with SA's development in as short and concise a format as possible. Where inadequate progress is observed, it remains the decision-makers' prerogative and responsibility to decide which policy levers to pull and which issues to prioritise. In this way the NDP Assessment Report is a tool to measure developmental progress, in order to ultimately improve implementation.

In collaboration with our network of partners, the BER will annually update the NDP Assessment Report so that it can become a valuable resource that references progress with achieving South Africa's development objectives. Consistency in the selection of indicators is important to track progress, but interested parties are welcome to reach out if they have indicators and, importantly, data sources that we could consider as part of this effort in future.

This report shows progress in South Africa's development in some areas, though outcomes have fallen short of the NDP's aspirations in several key indicators. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted and further intensified many of South Africa's developmental challenges. Strong corrective action is needed to achieve the targets of the NDP. Success will require a collective effort by all of society – government, the private sector, churches and NGOs – to realise these goals. With the Annual NDP Assessment Report, the BER and its network of collaborators hope to contribute to the accelerated, and ultimately successful, implementation of the NDP as we traverse the journey to 2030.

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² Ibid.